

H.B. No. 5044: An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year
Ending June 30, 2017

Laura Smits

February 18, 2016

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Laura Smits, I am the parent of Willem, a 26-year old man who receives day services from Ability Beyond in Bethel.

I would like to share my concerns with House Bill 5044: An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017.

My son Willem is autistic and intellectually disabled—and in order for him to function in our sensory overloaded world, he requires routine and stability. When he was a baby, the only way to comfort him was a mechanical swing, as he got older medications and behavior modifications in school helped reduce his anxiety enough for him to learn (to a point) and get along with others. But the slightest modification in his schedule from even the simplest thing such as a snow day or delay can make him anxious and agitated. He has watched his younger sister go off to college and start her life in the working world, Ability Beyond is the closest thing he has to a typical young man's life experience. At Ability, he spends his day with his disabled peers and among professionals who understand him and work with him to become as happy as he can be with dignity and hope for some semblance of a quality life. If Ability went away tomorrow, the burden would be on one of his parents to not only replace Ability Beyond and the routine it provides for him, but would also require someone to stay home from work and lose income to take care of him—impacting not only his quality of life, but ours as well. Please, please, please reconsider taking funds from this already marginalized and overlooked population of adults. Connecticut needs to step up and take care of its most vulnerable by properly funding the organizations who do the heavy lifting by caring for our children, now adults, who, through no fault of their own, must rely on the community and society to take care of them.

Thank you.

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